

Smith Valley Conservation District

Annual Report

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SVCD Battles Noxious Weeds

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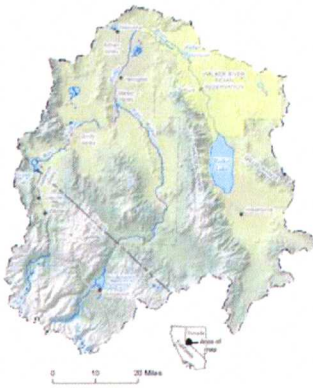
SVCD targeted noxious weed management as a priority for the area. During the last year, we actively participated with the Walker River Basin Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) serving as co-chair of the group. Using CWMA funds, we were able to give Smith Valley landowners herbicides to treat noxious weeds located on their properties. In addition, for the third consecutive year, we treated perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*) for several Smith Valley landowners. With each annual application of herbicide, there has been a reduction in amount of perennial pepperweed found which is very encouraging.

US Fish and Wildlife Service, using Desert Terminal Lakes Program funding, awarded Smith and Mason Valley Conservation Districts a cooperative agreement to begin a multiyear/multiphase noxious weed inventory and treatment program using a watershed approach. Both the Service and Districts recognized that in order for a noxious weed management project to be effective, it is important to address these weeds at the headwaters and continue downstream because the river is a major vector for noxious weed spread in the system. The East Walker River (EWR) was selected for the initial phase of this basin wide noxious weed program because relatively few landowners owned the majority of the river. The second and third phases of the project include the West Walker River and the river main stem until it enters Walker River Paiute Tribal lands, respectively. Walker River Basin Cooperative Weed Management Area partners (private landowners, Walker River Weed Control District, Nevada Department of Wildlife, University Nevada Cooperative Extension, US Forest Service and US Bureau of Land Management) provided technical advice, equipment and logistical support to the project. All but one landowner on the East Walker River granted access to the river. The one landowner that did not allow access only held 700 feet of the 70 mile river. We will add the West Walker River to the program spring 2010.



Russian knapweed and perennial pepperweed treated with herbicides and biocontrol agents

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Map of Walker River Basin
courtesy of USGS
<http://nevada.usgs.gov/walker/>

Desert Terminal Lakes Program

SVCD continued to participate on the Walker River Restoration Steering Committee (WRRSC) which was formed after the authorization of the H.R. 2419 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act (Public Law 109-103), to oversee Section 208(c)(1) of the appropriation for "tamarisk eradication, riparian area restoration and channel restoration efforts within the Walker River Basin that are designed to enhance water delivery to Walker Lake, with priority given to activities that are expected to result in the greatest increased water flows to Walker Lake." SVCD provides technical advice to the US Fish and Wildlife Service regarding restoration activities within the basin. We hope to begin selecting river projects during the next fiscal year, once the USFWS consultant completes a basin wide assessment which is scheduled for completion early 2009. Noxious weed orientated projects have already begun, including a comprehensive weed inventory and treatment program for the East Walker River and treatment of tamarisk infested areas on the Walker River Paiute Reservation.

The US Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) is drafting a Water Acquisitions Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in response to the Desert Terminal Lakes Program (Public Law 109-103) which allows University of Nevada to purchase land, water appurtenant to the land and other related interests from willing sellers in order to restore sufficient inflows to Walker Lake; approximately an additional 50,000 acre-feet per year above historical average flows.

BOR invited SVCD to participate in the EIS process as a cooperating agency based on our knowledge of river restoration projects, agronomic conservation practices, soil conservation practices and irrigation systems. SVCD provided comments throughout the year regarding development of alternatives, concerns with assumptions used to draft the EIS and other general comments.

Walker River Basin Workdays

The inaugural "Walker River Basin Workdays" were held fall 2007 at six different locations: Bridgeport, CA; Topaz, CA; Smith, NV; Yerington, NV; Schurz, NV and Hawthorne, NV. Elementary, middle and high school students visited the river to learn about water quality, riparian vegetation and native wildlife. In addition, they put the work in "workdays" by reseeding bare sandbars and installed bat houses. Western Nevada RC&D Council provide snacks, lunch and drinks for all the hungry volunteers. A special thank you is in order for SVCD Board Member Cub Wolfe who "manned" the grill to feed over 80 4th-12th grade Smith Valley School students and to Steven Fulstone for providing the field location.



Ashley Huntsberger was a good sport in the Ernie the Invertebrate station where students learned about adaptation for aquatic life at the Smith Valley Workday

River Projects

The West Walker River is a valuable resource for all stakeholders in Smith Valley, therefore, SVCD has taken the lead in implementing river stabilization projects to improve water quality and wildlife habitat. Using Clean Water Act Section 319 (h) funds, SVCD constructed three river stabilization projects using various bioengineering techniques including live stakes, juniper revetments, willow bundles and vegetated barbs as well as a rock "j-hook," rock barb and refusal trenches.

Over the past decade, Smith and Mason Valley Conservation Districts (S&MVCD) have installed a total of 12 of these projects using a multitude of hard and soft engineering techniques. Nevada Division of Environmental Protection awarded SVCD a grant to revisit these sites over the next three years to develop a repeatable monitoring protocol, implement any maintenance tasks and determine the effectiveness of each technique used. The proposed outcomes will be a better understanding which techniques are better suited for our conditions and an electronic presentation of District activities to be shared with District constituents, State Conservation Commission and funding sources. S&MVCD have pooled their AB-629 funding to provide the match requirements of the 319(h) grant.



Bioengineering workshop November 2007 participants are planting live stakes using the S&MVCD waterjet stinger

Applied Conservation

SVCD strongly encourages landowners and land managers to implement innovative conservation measures, as a result; we provided educational opportunities to learn about alternative conservation practices. First, SVCD coordinated a "Streambank Soil Bioengineering Technical Training Workshop" in November 2007 for 36 participants from private, local, state and federal entities. Over the three day workshop, students learned about hydrology, ecology, botany, soils and installation of bioengineering techniques from Chris Hoag, USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center Wetland Ecologist and Jon Fripp, USDA-NRCS National Design, Construction and Soil Mechanics Center Civil Engineer; two widely respected professionals in their fields. Second, in conjunction with NRCS Yerington Field Office, we hosted an irrigation system field tour where local producers learned the benefits and drawback to the various irrigation practices (flood, sprinkler and pivot) in Mason and Smith Valleys.



Irrigation system tour April 2008

Year to Year Business

Throughout the year, the District continues to participate in meetings with Walker River Irrigation District, Nevada Weed Action Committee, Walker River Basin Cooperative Weed Management Area, Walker River Restoration Steering Committee, Geographic Priority Area meetings on the Walker River, and other natural resource or conservation topics of interest to the SVCD. We also fulfill our reporting duties to our grantors, the State of Nevada, and the Conservation Commission. We play an active role in community-based projects. We hope to get several of our projects on the ground during the next few months and throughout the coming year. SVCD continues to develop and implement programs to protect and conserve our natural resources.



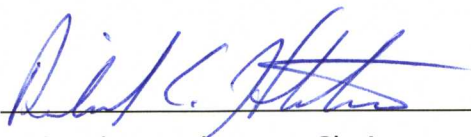
Hoye Canyon spring 2007

National Recognition For SVCD

Smith and Mason Valley Conservation Districts will be featured in a fall 2008 report authored by the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) showcasing Districts taking the lead in watershed scale projects and encouraging collaboration amongst all watershed stakeholders. We sincerely thank our East Walker River Noxious Weed Inventory and Treatment project partners for helping us receive this honor.



The Annual Report and Financial Report for July 1, 2007 — June 30, 2008 were approved at the regularly scheduled Board of Supervisors meeting September 17, 2008.



Richard Huntsberger, Chairperson

9/19/08
Date